COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

UPDATE FROM COMMUNITY SERVICE & LEGISLATIVE PROJECT

ENGAGING OUR YOUTH: SIMULATED ELECTION VOTING

Mission: Simulated voting programs offer young people an interactive, hands-on introduction to democratic engagement, transforming civic education from passive learning into active practice. By simulating real elections, the youth learn how to evaluate candidates, understand balloting procedures, and analyze public issues before they reach voting age. Participating in these practice polls demystifies the electoral system and builds early civic confidence, instilling lifelong habits of voter participation. Thus empowering young people before they reach voting age, giving them the hands-on practice needed to eliminate election day intimidation. Through a collaborative partnership with the American Legion Auxiliary and LawForKids.org together we will assist the upcoming generations by giving them a working productive voice in our democratic process.

Beyond the ballot box, simulated voting inspires youth to examine local community issues and see firsthand how government decisions impact their daily lives. School-based and youth group elections encourage civil debate, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue among peers with differing viewpoints. Empowering young citizens to express their voices through simulated elections strengthen civic literacy and prepares the next generation to serve as thoughtful, active contributors to American democracy. While society highly values the privacy of the voting booth as a solo civic at, first-time voters at eighteen often find the experience daunting and desire guidance, making simulated voting in schools an essential tool for principals, educators, and administrative support staff to build student confidence and reduce election-day anxiety.

HOW TO:

LawForKids.org is a non-partisan civics education initiative administered by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education (the charitable arm of the State Bar of Arizona). Through its signature "Kids Voting AZ" program, the organization collaborates with community partners -- including local schools, public libraries, and youth groups --to immerse young people in hands-on election simulations. By guiding the youth through voter registration, policy research, and realistic ballot processes, LawForKids.org has vast ways to support, such as providing educational support and fully bilingual ballots to ensure every student learns the process with confidence, clarity, and enthusiasm. Together, we can break down barriers and equip your students to become active, informed leaders and have a voice in our/their democratic process. Please visit their website for they have an abundance of free educational resources and games to draw our youth into learning, growing, and engaging at their level and their way. In essence the organization meets the youth where they are and speaks teenager!

- ✓ Teachers register participating students on-line for the program, eliminating the need for separate parental permission or waiver forms, as it is already integrated into the youth curriculum.
- ✓ On-line/download ready materials will be provided.

- ✓ An essential tool for principals to build student confidence and reduce election-day anxiety.

PARTICIPANTS: To run an effective simulated election, you can recruit youth participants across several target demographics:

- ❖ High School Civics, Criminal Justice, Humanities & Social Studies Students: Idea for classroom-level simulated (mock) elections using resources from platforms like iCivics or state-level programs like YOUth Vote, or LawForKids/AZ Kids Vote.
- ❖ Pre-Registered & First-Time Voters (Ages 17-19): High School seniors and college freshmen who are on the cusp of voting age, reachable through voter engagement groups like TurnUp or Rock the Vote.
- ❖ Youth Community Organizations: Idea is to reach elementary or junior high school age youth through; Junior Auxiliary, Boys/Girls Club, YMCA, Parks & Recreation, Local Libraries Youth Programs & Church Youth Groups.
- ❖ After School Programs, reach all age groups: Idea is you have the parents permission through the program and the simulated election voting project is part of the program's curriculum or fabric; such as, JROTC, Political Clubs, Student Government, Honor Society, & Civic Clubs.

UPDATE: From the desk of the ALA Department of Arizona Community Service & Legislative Chairmen Project:

- ➢ High School Civic Engagement: The Committee is currently pursuing several key initiatives, including discussions with Arizona area high schools to introduce a civic engagement program for future voters. This initiative aims to foster strong citizenship habits and empower students to actively shape their future, while addressing critical barriers such as language access for Spanish speakers and systemic intimidation surrounding the voting process.
- ➢ County Recorder Collaboration: Partnering with local Recorders' offices to leverage youth outreach programs that educate and inspire future civic leaders whose most important job - Shaping America's Future!
- ➢ Faith-Based Youth Outreach: Coordinating with local church youth groups to integrate civic education int their existing curriculum and engage young people where they are.
- ➢ Nonprofit Organization Engagement: Collaboration with Army Of Torches (AOT) is a youth-led 501(c)(3) dedicated to promoting principled leadership, service, and civic engagement among young people. Founded by a student leader & Battalion Commander of her JROTC and former AZ Girls State attendee, founded this organization to combat toxic polarization, its mission is to equip the next generation with leadership skills, public speaking training, and community service opportunities under the framework of carrying the weight of duty, taking action, and passing opportunities forward.

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